

**From:** Viktors  
**To:** Microsoft ATR  
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**Subject:** National security diminished by settling Microsoft case

I believe that the current settlement direction with Microsoft is a grave mistake. Diversity in operating systems and other computer software is essential for reducing the threat of cyber-attacks. Furthermore, giving one company, Microsoft, the ability to remotely monitor and control all computer activity is extremely dangerous, while also making it easier for an enemy to find a weakness that could be used to attack a much larger population of computers.

I am a long-time IT professional, but am writing as a private citizen. I know that whomever is reading this probably is not intimately familiar with all of the software details and would not understand an in-depth analysis. So I will just point out a few items, in high level terms, as best I can. I assume someone would contact me if they want to discuss more details.

Software can be viewed in many ways as an analogy to biological evolution. One of the dangers that biology has taught us is that the less diversity there is, the more vulnerable the population is. Likewise, operating system software and other office software that is used so widely that it is in almost every computer makes it easier to create a devastating cyber attack. Because the internals of the Microsoft software is seen by few eyes, it is more likely to contain numerous vulnerabilities, that clever hackers can exploit. This argues for breaking up monopolies in the IT industry so that there are more software choices for customers and so that any attack will harm a smaller population. In fact, ideally, the operating system and other security sensitive software source code should be viewable by everyone. This quickly leads to fixing the vulnerabilities, rather than hiding them, as with proprietary software. Microsoft will never publish their software source code, and thus will continue to put our IT infrastructure at greater risk, to the extent that they remain an operating system (and desktop office suite) monopoly.

What concerns me more, is that Microsoft's direction with XP is to give them more ability to "upgrade" user's software remotely, even without them knowing it. This may be nice for Microsoft, but it give Microsoft potentially unlimited "big brother" power over everyone's computer. But, even worse, once that update capability is hacked by less friendly people, they can use it to create cyber terror much easier than today.

I can already see numerous ways of working around the settlement agreement. Microsoft's latest XP operating system is an example. Even though they "publish" the interfaces, they require me to register my software for use with their interfaces, otherwise I will not be given the encryption keys required to talk through their "published" interfaces.

In general, I think the "settlement" will only let Microsoft reinforce its monopoly while making our IT infrastructure more vulnerable to cyber attacks.

Please let me know if anyone needs to discuss this further.

-Viktors Berstis, Austin Texas